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AUTHOR Sleeper, C. Freeman
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ABSTRACT

The traditional commitment of churches to higher education has been challenged by several trends within society and within the public colleges, including a narrowing notion of culture in liberal arts education, a growing recognition of cultural relativism, the trends toward equal access to education and toward vocationalism, the questioning of the meaning of work and job satisfaction, and the impact of economic scarcity. However, the basis for church commitment remains strong because of new opportunities to support colleges in their role of agents of social change and their concern for student values. The challenges which face the community colleges represent these opportunities and include meeting needs of the diversity of students, balancing vocational and technological education with liberal education, tending to the personal and learning problems of students, and balancing humanistic educational philosophy and pluralistic social theory in higher education. The responses of churches to these situations involve viewing the college as a moral community; and accepting as the mission of humanistic education to preserve and transmit culture, prepare persons for citizenship, increase consciousness of self and environment, stimulate creativity, and critique contemporary society. (MB)

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The Community Colleges:

Challenge to the Churches

By:

Dr. C. Freeman Sleeper

Perspectives on The Church and the Community College

Paper Number Fourteen

United Ministries in Higher Education

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Community Colleges:

CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES

Higher education in America has been supported by the churches, both directly (in the case of church-related colleges and seminaries) and indirectly (in the case of chaplaincies, campus ministries, Bible chairs, lectureships, and a variety of other programs). In this paper, I do not intend to review the history of such patterns, since this is available elsewhere.[1] Neither do I plan to comment on the literature on "religion and higher education," much of which is already familiar to readers of this article.[2] Rather, I want to do three things. In the first section, I want to look at some of the reasons why the churches have supported higher education that is public, nonsectarian, and essentially secular. Are those reasons still valid, in the light of some contemporary social trends? In the second section, I want to look at the ways in which community colleges represent, perhaps in an extreme form, some of the challenges and opportunities of public higher education. Finally, I want to argue a framework for the response of the churches, which takes into account both the traditional commitment of the churches as well as the new challenges of the community colleges. Clearly, each section will have to be brief, so that it is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive.

The Commitment of the Churches to Public Colleges

It is easy to understand why the churches have supported denominational and sectarian colleges, as an extension of their religious education function. With the expansion of

public higher education, it is also easy to understand why the churches have tried to find other ways of nurturing or propagating the faith in that context, or why they have viewed the secular colleges as fertile mission territories. Apart from this self-interest, however, there are more profound educational and theological reasons why the churches have been committed to public colleges.

Transmitting Western Culture

1. As long as the colleges are committed to transmitting Western culture, the churches can feel confident that this is--at least implicitly--dealing with their own religious sources of that culture. Liberal education has combined classical and Judaeo-Christian roots in a number of different ways at different periods, but it has always been heavily laden with a sense of historical continuity. T. S. Eliot's observation a generation ago puts it unambiguously:

> It is only when we imagine our culture as it ought to be, if our society were a really Christian society, that we can dare to speak of Christian culture as the highest culture; it is only by referring to all the phases of this culture, which has been the culture of Europe, that we can affirm that it is the highest culture that the world has ever known.[3]

In America, that sense of an homogeneous cultural tradition has not been so easy to achieve, but it has operated. With the rise of the university as the dominant model on the American scene, "Culture replaced religion as the guide to thought, behavior, and emotion."[4] As the universities became more secular, and as the academic study of religion became more acceptable on public campuses, it was often

defended on precisely these grounds that it is an indispensable part of our cultural heritage.[5] At the same time, several trends have had the effect of challenging some of the older assumptions.

Narrowing of the Notion of Culture

In the first place, there has been a narrowing of the notion of culture within a liberal arts curriculum. As the natural and social sciences have expanded within the universities, and as professional schools of various kinds have proliferated, culture has been viewed as the domain of the arts and humanities. Along with literature and drama, along with the fine and performing arts, along with philosophy, religion is seen as dealing with the products of the human imagination--i.e., with aesthetics. Obviously, if we accept this compartmentalized role, it excludes us from many of the central functions of higher education. The most we can expect is that we will be permitted to raise harmless questions from a safe distance. I will have more to say about this later.

Recognition of Cultural Relativism

Secondly, within higher education itself, there has been a growing recognition of cultural relativism, marked by the emergence of anthropology with its much more comprehensive concept of culture. The study of a multiplicity of societies and subcultures has called into question the normative character of "Western culture" and has opened the way for a study of many other religions.

This growing pluralism has also been reinforced by a third trend, one within the society, toward equal access to higher educa-

tion. With nearly 50% of the population aged 18 to 21 now attending college, with new clienteles (women, minorities, older adults) attending in greater numbers, with three-quarters of college students in public institutions, and with more than a third of those in the community colleges, we must deal with the diversity of national, linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds which we face in the classrooms. It becomes clear very quickly that the roots of our culture are much richer than we have admitted, and we are finally beginning to deal with that diversity. It is no longer enough to try to make everyone gentlemen and scholars (if indeed that was ever enough). We must operate with a more pluralistic notion of culture.

Equal Access to Education

The churches, then, need to realize that American culture is not, in fact, Protestant or even Christian. But they can welcome this pluralistic view, to which the public colleges are legally bound, because it protects their own right to be heard and seen among the many shapers of historical continuity in this country.

2. A second basis for the commitment of the churches has been the concept of vocation. During many periods, this was focused rather narrowly on the meaning of religious faith for one's vocation as a teacher or as a student. For example, during the 1950's this was reflected in publications concerned with issues of "faith and learning."[6] In the 1960's

Commitment to VOCATION

the debate over "situation ethics" gave a different dimension to the question of expressing one's religious faith in action. Today, what must happen within the churches as well as within the colleges is a re-thinking of the "work ethic."

On the one hand, we have a trend toward vocationalism (in the narrow sense) in higher education. The shift in Federal terminology from "higher education" to "post-secondary education," thus including proprietary and technical institutions, is the best evidence of this. This vocational thrust has been significant in America since the founding of the Land Grant colleges, but it has received a new boost with the establishment of career programs in two-year colleges. The current recession/depression has sent students scurrying for some useful skills, often by sacrificing their own hopes. One young woman commented that "I really want to be a high school math teacher, but I have to have something to do so I'm learning to be a secretary." Given the job market, that may be an accurate assessment; but we also have a responsibility to prepare students to deal with career changes in the next ten or twenty years. At this level, the question of how to earn a living becomes critical, and one task of any kind of ministry involves career counseling or guidance.

Meaning and Quality of Work

On the other hand, the meaning and quality of work is increasingly being called into question.

Impact of Economic Scarcity

> When it is said that work should be "meaningful," what is meant is that it should contribute to self-esteem, to the sense of fulfillment through the mastering of one's self and one's environment, and to the sense that one is valued by society. The fundamental question the individual worker asks is "What am I doing that <u>really</u> matters?" ...Basic to all work appears to be the human desire to impose order, or structure, on the world. The opposite of work is not leisure or free time; it is being victimized by some kind of disorder which, at its extreme, is chaos.[7]

By choice, and not by necessity, many workers are changing careers in order to find greater job satisfaction.

Finally, the impact of economic scarcity--of food and of natural resources--is forcing us to ask whether a person's worth has to be tied to his or her capacity to produce. It is forcing us to ask whether our physical well-being must be tied to the destruction of our environment. It is forcing us to ask whether our survival depends on competition, or whether there are indeed some alternatives.[8] Parker Palmer has addressed these same issues in his comments reprinted in the Church Society for College Work Report.[9] We doubly victimize community college students if we tell them that they should not want what everyone else has, anyway; but we still must ask how work can be made meaningful without exploiting others. The churches need to support the colleges in exploring a deeper meaning of vocation.

The College as Agents of SOCIAL CHANGE

3. Although bound to their own traditions, the churches have often supported the colleges as agents of <u>social change</u>. Increasingly, we must prepare our students for the fact that their world will be different--not only from the one we grew up in, but also from the one they grew up in. Social change is the basic fact of life in the twentieth century, and unless we can help students to understand that and to know how to deal with it, we have not done our job as educators. The question is not <u>whether</u> society will be transformed but <u>how</u>.

Daniel Bell, writing of the turmoil in colleges in the late 1960's, concluded that "A great and troubling task remains--to humanize technocracy and to 'tame' the apocalypse"; and his own studies of the post-industrial era began to raise questions about how that can be done.[10] In Bell's case, that statement came as an afterthought to his reflections on general education; for us, it must provide the point of departure. That is why we cannot be content to be shoved aside, as "humanists" who have no business asking about science and technology. Precisely because we do care about the human condition, we must ask about those forces which shape our social situation. Dr. William Birenbaum, president of Antioch College has put is succinctly: "The most crucial educational problem in modern civilization is how to prevent the separation of technical power from moral responsibility."[11] Kenneth Underwood's

prophetic study pointed toward social policy as the area where we need to join forces. It is not likely that the community colleges can engage directly in the formation of policy; but it is possible to help students see how policies are made and to measure their impact. Once again, that is a concern which the churches ought to share.

4. Finally, the churches have supported the colleges in their concern for student values. This is another area in which there is a considerable body of research literature. Some of it deals with profiles of students at different kinds of institutions. This information can be extremely useful to faculty and staff as a means of understanding the diversity of class, ethnic, religious, social, and personal values which I mentioned before. The difference between students and faculty expectations is an issue which needs to be dealt with openly in order to avoid resentment, frustration, and even despair. The study of Oakland and Monteith colleges is instructive for public education generally; and Florence Brawer's study of the "generation gap" is an eye-opener for community colleges.[12]

Concern for STUDENT VALUES

Other studies have attempted to discover what happens to the beliefs, attitudes, and values of college students as a result of attending college.

The Importance of "Student Ethos"

The importance of the peer group--of what I prefer to call a "student ethos" on a given campus--has been well established. So also, apparently, is the long-term trend toward individualization and secularization. This problem is especially acute in the two-year colleges because of the more traditional or conservative value orientation of the students. In his recent study (which unfortunately has little data on community college students),Dean Hoge observed:

> The present-day religious leader is faced with somewhat of a dilemma, in that some trends which he may welcome will, with certain levels of probability, bring with them other trends which he may not welcome. If he works toward greater individualism, greater political participation, and more tolerance of cultural and religious diversity in American life, he will probably also be working toward reduced participation in the traditional church. The intelligent discussion of religious change and church policy requires an understanding of the interrelation of these various social trends.[13]

I do not pretend that there is any easy solution of this dilemma, except to insist that any kind of personal involvement in social change ultimately requires a supporting or nurturing group. No education, and no ministry, is complete if it ignores any of those three dimensions--the personal, the group, and the change.

Value Questions Must be Raised

In our present context, I think that the value questions must continue to be raised about many of the assumptions which are at the core of higher education itself. What value implications operate in the various academic disciplines? What are appropriate

limits for research and for the way it is carried out? What values are implicit in the way we teach, or counsel, or administer? What assumptions are being made by a particular college about its intellectual and social life, or about its services to community groups? It is encouraging to note the beginnings being made in exploring these questions by the U.M.H.E., the Church Society for College Work, the Danforth Foundation, and other organizations concerned with ecumenical support for liberal education.

The Community Colleges: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the first section, I have argued that the traditional commitment of the churches to higher education has been challenged by several trends, both within society and within the public colleges themselves; but the basis for that commitment remains strong because of new opportunities. Now it is time to ask how the community colleges represent those challenges and opportunities.

The challenges are clear, in terms of each of the points which I raised above. For example, (a) the diversity of students is greater than in other areas of higher education, as many studies have indicated.[14] In most areas of the country, the bulk of students are from blue-collar,

Diversity of Students

white ethnic families, plus a relatively high percentage of minority students. In this context, it is impossible to assume a common core of knowledge, a broad understanding of Western language and literature, or even the same cultural and linguistic patterns. The communication task is challenging when a single course may include students in whose homes the following languages are spoken: Italian, Greek, Polish, Spanish (both Puerto Rican and Castilian), French, Hebrew, Chinese, "Black English", and perhaps several others. So far, we are only beginning to know enough about the learning patterns of these students to know how to link their facility in conversation with reading and writing skills, or how to link their manual and artistic skills to conceptual tasks. For the faculty members, this means developing a wide range of teaching styles and strategies.

Vocational and Technical Aspects Contested

(b) The area of vocational and technological education is one of the most bitterly contested aspects of the social function of two-year colleges. On the one hand, it is challenged by faculty who still think that higher education should be for a leisured class--a classical view that liberal education should reject any utilitarian impulses. As I have indicated, I do not want to abandon the notion of liberal education; but I think it is about time that we pursued it in a more democratic, pluralistic context; and that means developing a new conception of "vocation" which is more approate to becoming a more truly liberated person.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to argue the "cooling out" function of two-year colleges, to view them as a "safety valve releasing pressures that might otherwise disrupt the dominant system.[15] An even more radical interpretation views these colleges as nothing more than agents of socialization for commerce and industry, and it is not a difficult case to make.

Safety Valves?

For my own part, the concept of manpower planning is legitimate. "Planning in America's education system calls to mind Boswell's remark about a dog walking on its hind legs: "It is not done well, but one is surprised that it is done at all."[16] At the present time, for example, it is impossible to get Department of Labor data on what two-year college graduates are doing, since they are lumped into the general category of persons with 1-3 years of college. A more rational program of planning would ultimately involve a restructuring of education, and it would move us even closer to the goal of a life-long education, (including career re-training at various stages) for anyone who wanted it. It seems much better to argue the role of the comprehensive community college on these grounds--providing maximum flexibility in education for everyone--than on the grounds of upward social mobility.[17]

Manpower Planning

Moreover, I also want to insist (for reasons I shall argue later) that we are not serving the society well unless we are engaged in one of the functions of liberal education: a critique of the values of technological society. In the long run, our ability to transform those values may be the only thing which will enable the society to survive.

Critique of the Values of Technological Society

(c) We have already noted that these students bring values which do not necessarily reflect a homogenized "melting pot." They do not arrive in college with the usual academic skills in reading, writing, computation, and mathematics. They score less well on measures of creativity and abstract reasoning. They are also less motivated, more easily discouraged, and more likely to think of themselves as failures. The emotional problems--personal conflicts with family or with the law, unwanted pregnancies, having to work full-time and support a family while attending school--are close to the surface and must be dealt with as part of the educational environment.

As Patricia Cross has reminded us, we must not think of them as students with "deficiencies" and "special educational problems." They are different, but increasingly they are the <u>typical</u> students in higher education. They are fun to be with. Because they lack that thin veneer of sophistication so common to our image of a "college student," they are not afraid to say what they really think, and it is much

easier to tell whether or not personal growth is taking place. One of my students, when I commented that her report was one of the best things which happened in our class, promptly corrected me, "It was the best thing!"

(d) If I were to try to summarize the main issue which lies behind all of those challenges, it is to work out a view of public higher education which is consistently humanistic in its educational philosophy and consistently pluralistic in its social theory. If that sounds like a task bequeathed to us by John Dewey, that is not a bad place to begin.

Humanistic/Pluralistic

Much of the debate over the community colleges--and over an Open Admissions policy like that of the City University of New York--has focused on this conflict between "egalitarian" and "meritocratic" notions. The term "egalitarian" here does not refer to arrangements within higher education itself (the "participatory democracy" of the late sixties), but rather to the way in which that education reflects and influences social goals and values. In a perceptive discussion of this topic, Thomas Green points out that many of the democratic challenges are not to the principle of meritocracy but in the way in which is has been applied.

> The dispute is not whether the educational system should reward ability. The question is rather how narrowly the nature of

> the ability to be rewarded should be defined..The real challenge of the democratizers of education is not that we should abandon meritocratic criteria but that we should not define the boundaries of merit too narrowly.[18]

The danger of the egalitarian challenge is that it will produce a monolithic uniformity in collegiate education--a vast system of public colleges with little room for creativity and little concern for the quality of education. This would be a disaster, and it must be avoided at any cost. That is precisely why it is so important for us to make the community college a laboratory for democratic social change. That is why pluralism is so crucial, because it forces us to work at creating a diversity of institutional styles. Alongside the university model, oriented toward professional training and research within the disciplines, we must struggle to maintain some viable alternative learning patterns, like those which have been established in many of the community colleges.

The Community College: A Laboratory for Social Change

The challenge to the churches, then, is to support us in working out this humanistic, pluralistic view of higher education. This means engaging in theological discussion, at the theoretical level of the task. It also means moral and even financial support, at the level of working out new programs.

The <u>opportunities</u> are also great. The expansion of the community colleges with a variety of options for adults, has drawn new constituencies into higher education: commuter courses, week-end colleges, degree

programs for para-professionals and "new careerists," seminars and re-training programs for men and women in mid-career, special opportunities for those over 65. Many church groups can use these continuing educational options to their own advantage if they know more about them.

Religion in Public Education

Chances for the teaching of religion in public education have expanded along with the community colleges. Roger Schmidt, in an earlier "Perspective Paper" (#3) on "Religion and the Community College," reported on some of these developments. THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN TWO-YEAR COLLEGES reports a nation-wide study which I conducted for the American Academy of Religion and the Council on the Study of Religion (under a grant from the Charles Merrill Trust), as well as presenting three course models worked out in a two-week workshop held in summer of 1974, at Colorado College. Basically, we found that the academic study of religion is now generally accepted, and more than 50% of the two-year colleges are currently offering courses. There are still local communities where there is resistance, but Schmidt has given a clear summary of the legal situation and of the rationale for including religion in public education, and the report of our project will also contain a similar statement.

Variety of Courses in "Religion"

In the community colleges, Bible courses are still popular, but World Religion courses are even more frequently offered in the public institutions. Insofar as a trend is apparent, it is away from what I have called the "seminary model" and toward a greater diversity of offerings in the field of religion. To indicate how this can be done more effectively, even in an introductory course in religion, the project volume offers three different models: World Religions; Introduction to Religion; and a topical or thematic course focusing on "Blood: the Lifestream of Civilization." The last suggests a way in which certain root metaphors can illuminate our culture, demonstrating what the study of religion has in common with other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.

It is clear that full-time faculty who are teaching religion in the community and junior colleges also have training in other disciplines--often in English or Philosophy, or history--and nearly always teach in that area as well. It is also apparent that many of the part-time faculty are either campus ministers or local clergy, although we have not been able to do the kind of analysis of the questionnaire data which would be more specific on this point. From this data, it should be possible to develop a comprehensive list of faculty teaching religion in two-year colleges throughout the country, but this task will require additional funding.

What I am suggesting, then, is that one of the opportunities for the churches

in local communities is to support the teaching of religion in the community colleges. The precedents exist; so also do a variety of models for introducing courses in religion. Such instruction cannot be sectarian, so that the more ecumenical such support is, the better. Moreover, it is clear that such instruction must be academically respectable; it must meet the standards of preparation, integrity, and openness required of other faculty at the same institution. A college administrator who can count on this kind of support from the local churches is much more apt to be sympathetic. Campus ministers are in a particularly strategic position, since in many cases they are among the few people who can act as brokers between the college faculty and administration, on the one hand, and the church groups on the other.

Opportunity for Churches to Support Teaching of Religion

A FRAMEWORK FOR RESPONSE

This final section suggests a way in which the churches can respond to the community colleges and to public higher education in general. It is an eclectic approach, in that it ultimately has to draw on the best insights from a variety of disciplines: educational research and philosophy, ethics, psychology, social and political theory. The contribution of the churches is to add the

insights of a theological anthropology--a view of human nature and destiny which makes sense out of the educational task. Obviously, this approach is an ambitious one, and it will require our cooperative effort on a sustained basis to make it work.

College as a Moral Community

1. We must begin with the notion of college as a moral community. Since part of our own theological heritage is to think about the churches as voluntary associations which are "communities of moral discourse," it is a congenial point of departure.

> By a community of moral discourse I mean a gathering of people with the explicit intention to survey and critically discuss their personal and social responsibilities in the light of moral convictions about which there is some consensus and to which there is some loyalty.[19]

One of the functions which the campus ministry can perform is to make sure that this kind of moral discourse happens, either through groups on campus or through local congregations. One of the immediate tasks, for example, might be the working out of that new sense of vocation which I have already mentioned.

The difficulty with this model, of course, is that it cannot apply directly to a publicly supported, secular institution like the community college. The college, that is to say, is not a voluntary association. It has only a limited set of values which can be taken for granted which concern primarily the process of inquiry. Rather, as I have argued, the college

resembles the larger society in the sense that a variety of cultural and value systems are represented. At its best, the college not only transmits skills and knowledge, but it engages in a dynamic process of sharing attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions. It becomes a means for students to learn how conflict in society can be handled more creatively.

Many Resources Available

Elsewhere, I have suggested that there are a variety of resources for helping us to think through the concept of college as a moral community, although the job has not yet been done systematically. Social theorists such as Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons have correctly reminded us that a central function of college is transmitting the basic values of the society; but this functionalist perspective does not deal adequately with the pluralistic and dynamic elements in the contemporary scene in American higher education.[20] Educational philosophers from Socrates and Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau to Dewey have dealt with the relationship of moral action to the political process. Dewey's position is especially germane, as I suggested, since he was one of the first people to wrestle with the meaning of mass education in a technological society. From the perspective of developmental psychology, the work of Piaget and more recently of Lawrence Kohlberg has dealt with the capacity for

moral reasoning. Although focused primarily on the capacity for abstract, conceptual thought, this work is instructive for ways of presenting ethical dilemmas in the classroom. Another group of approaches, which have also received a great deal of attention in the past few years, come out of humanistic psychology: "affective" and "confluent" education, values clarification, and the like. With a number of variations, what these groups emphasize is the process by which an individual affirms his or her self-worth, in contrast to Piaget and Kohlberg where the emphasis is on rational discrimination according to ethical principles. Finally, I think a college education needs to bring students into confrontation with the character of social change. Virtually any subject matter in the college curriculum is capable of doing this, and it is also a point at which students can integrate their own experience outside the college.[21]

Confrontation with the Character of Social Change

Without trying to say exactly how we can put together insights from these various sources, I am arguing that the concept of a moral community is the most adequate way of thinking about the role of the community college. It permits us to talk about the socializing functions of transmitting, criticising, and transforming cultural values. It permits us to talk about personal as well as social responsibility--not just of students, but of all members of the college community. It enables us to see that college is not a value-free pursuit of knowledge, but an association of people which

in fact shapes the capacity for making moral decisions.

2. Coupled with this view of what a college does, I think we must speak about education for responsibility. This has always been the purpose of a liberal education, and colleges cannot abandon this claim without endangering both their own health and that of the society. If liberal education is to have a future, however, it must recover this insight and give it forms appropriate to the two-year colleges.

Education for Responsibility

(a) One function of a liberal education has always been to preserve and transmit culture. As we noted in the first section of this paper, this has also been one of the reasons why the churches have supported public education. However, I have also argued that if we are to educate students for responsible action, we need a richer and more dynamic concept of tradition. Indeed, in view of the tendency of technology to ignore the past, we must even reconstruct the notion of cultural tradition.[22] Briefly, this means three things. It means incorporating into the American tradition many of the symbols which are alive to different ethnic groups and subcultures; "Americanization" will no longer mean that different groups will have to surrender their own past in order to belong. It means

Culture

a different mode of inquiry, in which we become active inquirers rather than passive listeners, so that we and our students can develop a genuine conversation with the past. Finally, it means preparing students to deal with the future, with the requirements for the survival of our culture. The culture can inspire us to think through the consequences of the choices we make. It can help us to anticipate and influence the future. To that extent, it educates us and our students for responsibility.

Citizenship

(b) A second function of liberal education has been to prepare persons for citizenship. Traditionally, that has meant an educated elite. In the present context of the community colleges, it means a much broader notion of civic responsibility, of people who work for the "public interest" or what used to be called the "commonweal": the cop who manages to keep honest; the community organizer who helps a neighborhood seek solutions to their common problems; the consumer affairs advocate; the teacher aide or the parent who works to get funds to educate handicapped children; and many more. In view of what I have said about "vocation," civic responsibility takes on new meaning. It includes not only the choice of a career and personal work habits, but also questions of corporate responsibility and the use of leisure time. In community colleges, which stress career preparation, these questions ought to loom large on the agenda.

(c) A third aspect of education

for responsibility concerns helping students to increase their consciousness of themselves and their environment, which is basically the area of values that I mentioned in the first section. There are a number of specific problems which must be tackled, which include more effective ways of linking experience and knowledge; affective and cognitive learning; aesthetic and moral values; facts and values.

Consciousness

In general terms, this function of a liberalizing education is to inform the conscience of its constituents. The term "inform" is carefully chosen. On the one hand, it includes the need for technical knowledge and skills, which are essential to decision making in a complex society. The community college, like the university, must help to transmit these. On the other hand, it also insists on the need to "in-form" the conscience for ethical reflection about the humane uses of that knowledge. Higher education provides a forum, often the only one, in which competing groups within the society can be brought together to explore the meaning of responsible action.

Informing the conscience, in these two senses, is an educational function. It does not imply indoctrination. The college is not sectarian, in the sense of forming the consciences of its members from a particular

theistic or religious perspective. Nor is it partican, in the sense of wanting to impose a single political ideology. Rather, it seeks to make persons aware of the criteria, the measures of worth, for what they do, so that they can act wisely.

(d) A fourth function of liberal or humanistic learning is to stimulate creativity. It does this by teaching students to trust their own imaginations, so that it can really be done within any part of the curriculum or in extra-curricular activities. For example, Albert Rabil has suggested a way of organizing the study of theology around "creative centuries."

Creativity

In line with my earlier comments, I want to suggest that the pluralistic context of the community college can be an important condition for intellectual curiosity and creativity. It will not do this for everyone; but the number of options encourages a kind of independence which is necessary to pursue eccentric ideas. At the same time, an education for responsibility does press for a certain degree of consensus. In the first place, it seeks a consensus on the educational process, by insisting that values must be examined because they are an integral part of what it means to be human. Moreover, the conception of human beings as responsible persons may untimately provide the basis for a consensus to emerge out of the multitude of disciplines. Responsibility is not just a matter of reason but of the whole person--feeling, willing, valuing, be-

lieving. Thus, within a pluralistic context, a liberal education can claim without any embarrassment to explore what it means to be a responsible human being.

Critique of Contemporary Society

(e) Finally, a humanistic education performs a critique of contemporary society, as I have suggested before. Toleration is a necessary condition for this kind of critique. The college must tolerate within itself differences of opinion, conflicting points of view, if it is to be in a position to speak to the society; but because it does embrace such different positions, it cannot address society with a single voice. In addition, institutional neutrality is the price which the school pays in order to be tolerated by society. The struggle for academic freedom has been a long and hard one, which is never completely won--especially in the community colleges, which are so vulnerable to local pressures. To preserve its freedom, the college cannot play partisan politics.

The ability to criticize prevailing norms and values is what I call the social responsibility of higher education. In the community college which operates as a moral community, this will help to influence priorities; in community services; in services to students and faculty; in curriculum; and inevitably in budget

calculations. Indeed, it will force the college to ask in what ways it can better help to improve the quality of life in the region which it serves. As the same time, the college cannot afford to sacrifice its institutional neutrality.

> What is needed are reforms that will move the institution not toward neutrality concerning social and political realities but toward a position of institutional independence from which to evaluate existing conditions and probe alternative futures. The institution of higher education must be seen as a very special sort of place--the place of criticism and creativity; a place that, far from being distant or indifferent, serves society best as a center of independent thinking.[24]

In this final section, therefore, I have argued that the response of the churches to the community colleges needs to take place within a framework of reflection which is informed by educational and social theory as well as by theology. The primary categories are those of college as a moral community, with the task of educating for responsibility. Out of their theological tradition, the churches can deepen the meaning of "moral community" and of "responsibility." These are ambitious and difficult tasks. But what more important question can we address to ourselves and our students than the meaning of human responsibility in the contemporary world and its future?

FOOTNOTES

[1]Most pertinent are Merrimon Cuninggim, THE COLLEGE SEEKS RELIGION (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947) and Part II, "The Historic Shape of the Future Church," in Kenneth Underwood's THE CHURCH, THE UNIVERSITY, AND SOCIAL POLICY (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), I, 47-94. Other insights are scattered through the standard studies of the American university (Rudolph, Veysey) and especially in Oscar and Mary Handlin, THE AMERICAN COLLEGE AND AMERICAN CULTURE (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

[2]Excellent bibliographies are contained in Volume I of the Underwood study and in Claude Welch, GRADUATE EDUCATION IN RELIGION (Missoula, Montana: University of Montana Press, 1971).

[3]T. S. Eliot, NOTES TOWARD A DEFINITION OF CULTURE (London: Faber and Faber, 1947); p. 33.

[4]Handlin and Handlin, p. 50.

[5]This is the thrust of Robert Michaelsen's THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES (New Haven, Conn.: The Society for Religion in Higher Education, 1965) and of Roger Schmidt's article "The Teaching of Religion in California's Community Colleges, reprinted as #3 of the U.M.H.E. "Perspective Papers."

[6]Typical of this approach is LIBERAL LEARNING AND RELIGION, ed. Amos N. Wilder (New York: Harper, 1951), the Hazen series "Religious Perspectives of College Teaching," and Alexander Miller's FAITH AND LEARNING (New York: Association Press, 1960.)

[7]WORK IN AMERICA (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, n.d.), pp. 5, 7. This report was the work of a special task force, under Elliott Richardson as Secretary of HEW. Also provocative are Thomas Green, WORK, LEISURE, AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOLS (New York: Random House, 1968) and Studs Terkel, WORKING (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

[8]Among the growing literature in this area, perhaps the most helpful is Robert Heilbroner's AN INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN PROSPECT (New York: Norton, 1974).

[9]CSCW Report (September, 1974). A still instructive study of religion and economic values is Gerhard Lenski's THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), Chapter 3.

[10]Daniel Bell, THE REFORMING OF GENERAL EDUCATION (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 318-19. His sociological analysis is extended in THE COMING OF THE POST-INDUSTRIAL ERA (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

[11]William Birenbaum, "Something for Everybody is Not Enough," in HIGHER EDUCATION FOR EVERYBODY? ed. W. Todd Furniss, (Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1971), p. 70.

[12]David Riesman, Joseph Gusfeild, and Zelda Gamson, ACADEMIC VALUES AND MASS EDUCATION (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971); Florence Brawer, VALUES AND THE GENERATION GAP (AACJC Monograph Series #11, Washington, D. C.: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1971).

[13]Dean R. Hoge, COMMITMENT ON CAMPUS (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 191-92.*

[14]The most important of the recent studies are Leland Medsker and Dale Tillery, BREAKING THE ACCESS BARRIERS (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971); K. Patricia Cross, BEYOND THE OPEN DOOR (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971); Charles R. Monroe, PROFILE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972); and David S. Bushnell, ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE: NEW PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973).

[15]Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, THE ACADEMIC REVOLUTION (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1968), p. 492.

[16]Ivar Berg, "Higher Education," in NEW YORK IS VERY MUCH ALIVE, ed. Eli Ginsberg (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973). p. 202.

[17]For the development of this thesis, see Avner Hovne, "Manpower Planning and the Restructuring of Education," in URBAN PLANNING AND SOCIAL POLICY, ed. Bernard J. Frieden and Robert Morris (New York: Basic Books, 1968), pp. 404-422.

[18]Thomas Green, "Challenge to Meritocracy," in LIBERAL EDUCATION, Vol. 58 (May, 1972), pp. 159-60; the article includes pp. 157-69.

[19]James M. Gustafson, THE CHURCH AS MORAL DECISION-MAKER (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), p. 84.

* See also Alexander Astin, FOUR CRITICAL YEARS (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978).

[20]Emile Durkheim. MORAL EDUCATION, trans. Everett K. Wilson (New York: Free Press, 1961); Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[21]In Dewey's words: Knowledge is humanistic in quality not because it is about human products in the past, but because of what it does in liberating human intelligence and human sympathy. Any subject matter which accomplishes this is humane, and any subject matter which does not accomplish it is not even educational." John Dewey, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION (New York: Free Press, 1944), p. 230.

[22]The phrase "the reconstruction of the very idea of tradition" is that of G. Jon Roush, "What Will Become of the Past," in DAEDALUS, Vol. 98 (Summer, 1969), pp. 641-53; the phrase appears on p. 646.

[23]Albert Rabil, Jr., "Creative Centuries in Theology: the Fourth Century," in TEACHING RELIGION TO UNDERGRADUATES, ed. Luke T. Johnson (New Haven, Conn.: The Society for Religion in Higher Education, 1973), pp. 83-94.

[24]Warren Bryan Martin, "Mission Undesirable," in HIGHER EDUCATION FOR EVERYBODY?, p. 161.

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The Community Colleges:

Challenge to the Churches

By:

Dr. C. Freeman Sleeper

Perspectives on The Church and the Community College

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